Crop harvesting losses

1837. SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that crop harvesting losses in India are as huge as Rs. 65,000 crores per year;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the details of steps being contemplated by Government to control and minimize harvesting losses of such a magnitude?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) and (b) In a study conducted by the Directorate of Marketing & Inspection post harvest losses at producers' level have been estiamted to be varying from 1.79 to 7.14 per cent for foodgrains and pulses and from 16.35 to 30.00 per cent in the case of fruits and vegetables. The wastage depends on nature of produce, its shelf life, mode of transportation, packaging, processing, distance from the market, availability of infrastructure facilities like rural godowns and cold storage etc.

(c) The Government has taken the following step to reduce post-harvest losses in the country.

Indian Council of Agricultural Research has been developing new techniques/systems to minimize the losses in agricultural produce in the country through the Central Institute of Post Harvest Engineering & Technology, Ludhiana and the All India Coordinated Research Project on Post Harvest Technology. The All India Coordinated Research Project on Post harvest Technology has 33 co-operative centres located throughout the country to develop regionally differentiated post harvest technology packages for crop, livestock product and fisheries produce in terms of reducing post harvest losses, aiding value to the main produce and by-products.

National Horticulture Board, an autonomous body under this Ministry is implementing programmes to reduce post harvest losses by providing investment subsidy on the capital cost of infrastructure projects for post-harvest handling, processing and marketing of horticulture produce. The rate of subsidy is 20 percent of the project cost with a miximum limit of Rs. 25 lakh per project.

The Department is also implementing schemes for construction/modernization of Cold Storage and Rural godowns in the country with a view to provide scientific storage facilities to farmers. Under these schemes, subsidy is provided @ 25% of capital cost of the storage project in general

and @ 33.33 per cent in case of North Eastern States, hilly areas and Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes enterpreneurs. The scheme of Construction of Rural Godown has recently been revised to restrict subsidy on the storage projects for individual, companies and corporations @ 15 percent of the project cost.

Declining average agricultural growth rate

1838. SHRI R.K. ANAND: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the annual average agriculture growth rate has dipped from 4.9 per cent in the Eighth Five Year Plan to 1.3 per cent;

(b) if so, the reasons for the poor performance of the agriculture sector; and

(c) whether the agriculture sector is in a position fo face competition from the developed countries' agro-products, if not, the manner in which Government propose to strengthen it in the light of WTO agreement?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) The annual average agriculture growth rate has declined from 4.7% in Eighth Plan to 1.2% in first three years of the 10th Five Year Plan period.

(b) Indian Agriculture continues to be heavily influenced by fluctuations in rainfall as about 60% of the net sown area is rainfed. The decline in the growth rate was due to weather related shocks caused mainly by deficiency in rainfall. Inadequate irrigation facilities also eroded the capacity of the agriculture sector to withstand such shocks.

(c) The Government is continuously monitoring the surge in imports of sensitive items on a regular basis. Over the last few years, several measures have been initiated for enhancing the level of protection to the farmers and boosting exports after the removal of Quantitative Restrictions (QRs.) Some of the specific measures taken in this regard are given below:

(i) Import duty on a number of agriculture products has been increased;

(ii) Import of all packaged commodities has been subjected to compliance of the standards as applicable on the domestic commodities;

(iii) Import of all primary agriculture products has been subjected to a import permit to be issued under the Plant Quarantine Order.

(iv) The Government has initiated various measures to promote the export of agriculture products which, *inter alia*, include setting up